



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF  
AIR AND RADIATION

September 6, 2000

Dear Set-top Box Manufacturers and Other Interested Parties:

I am pleased to provide the ENERGY STAR<sup>7</sup> Set-top Box Specification. Your valuable feedback and input throughout the development process has been integral to the design of a robust specification and is very much appreciated. Please note that EPA considers this specification to be final and has no further plans to revise it at this time.

The only significant change from Draft 4.0 (issued in May 2000) is that a 5-Watt allowance for the LNB on satellite systems has been added. (See Table 1 in Specification for details.) EPA implemented this change for three reasons:

- The 5-Watt allowance for LNBs provides a level playing field for satellite providers and digital cable devices. In effect, the ENERGY STAR specification focuses on the set-top box itself and not on the power consumed by the antenna, head end, etc.
- LNBs are physically separate devices from satellite receivers and thus receiver manufacturers may not be able to influence their power consumption, at least in the short term.
- Systems with multiple LNBs are becoming more prevalent in the marketplace. EPA does not wish to set an energy-efficiency guideline that limits product functionality and/or features.

While EPA did not receive any written comments from the Electronic Industries Alliance/Consumer Electronics Association (EIA/CEA), it did receive some feedback during a conference call with Amanda Monchamp, EIA/CEA representative. The issues discussed and EPA's responses are provided below.

- **Tier 2 Timeframe:** The second phase of the specification, Tier 2, commences on January 1, 2004 or three years after Tier 1. EPA feels the three-year timeframe between the two tiers is reasonable and has provided language in the specification to allow models qualified under Tier 1 to continue to carry the label until phased out of the market. In other words, the Tier 2 specification will not apply retroactively to models previously qualified under the Tier 1 specification.

EPA concurs with industry that it's very difficult to predict what the set-top box market will look like in three years since it is developing and changing so rapidly. Nonetheless, EPA has provided a Tier 2 specification to serve as an "energy-efficiency roadmap" for manufacturers. EPA will continue to closely monitor the dynamic set-top box market and will entertain alterations to the Tier 2 specification and product classifications at a later date, as appropriate.

- **3 to 7 Watts for Category 1:** Some manufacturers have questioned why EPA has established a specification for Category 1 products that increases from 3 Watts in Tier 1 to 7 Watts in Tier 2. Put simply, EPA doesn't feel the specification should be interpreted in this way. EPA isn't raising the specification for Category 1 products under Tier 2; rather, it is removing all categories and establishing one specification for all set-tops under Tier 2. This approach has been taken because EPA believes that one specification for all set-top boxes will be both desirable and necessary as product convergence continues. Again, EPA will reevaluate the specification as the Tier 2 implementation date approaches.

- **Products with Hard Off:** EIA/CEA asked EPA to clarify whether the set-top box guidelines cover products with a hard off. In response, EPA has added language to the specification making it clear that products with a hard off “standby” mode may qualify for the ENERGY STAR label. (See Section 3B in the Specification.) If a particular model has multiple standby/low-power modes and one of them is a hard-off “standby” mode, the power measurement must be taken with the unit in the most energy consumptive standby/low-power mode. Additional detail is provided in the Testing Guidelines.

The next step in the program development process is for EPA to circulate the new Partnership Agreement with the set-top box specification included. This Agreement will differ from the traditional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) because EPA is overhauling its MOU process; however, the ENERGY STAR Program’s guiding principles will remain the same. One of the key changes is that multiple MOUs will no longer be required to join multiple program areas. By signing one “umbrella” MOU, partners will be eligible to participate, at any time, in any one or all of the ENERGY STAR program areas.

EPA plans to circulate the Partnership Agreement to all interested manufacturers in late September 2000. To familiarize you with the new Agreement, the following is a brief list of the partner commitments:

- Comply with current eligibility criteria (i.e., energy-efficiency specifications)
- Comply with current Logo Use Guidelines
- Qualify at least one ENERGY STAR labeled model within two years of activating the set-top boxes portion of the agreement
- Provide clear and consistent labeling of ENERGY STAR qualified set-top boxes
- Provide to EPA, on an annual basis, an updated list of ENERGY STAR qualifying set-top box models
- Provide to EPA, on an annual basis, unit shipment data of those set-top box products qualified as ENERGY STAR (data will be masked by EPA so as to protect the confidentiality of the partner)
- Notify EPA of a change in the designated responsible party or contacts for set-top boxes within 30 days

If your company is interested in joining ENERGY STAR for set-top boxes or if you have any questions about the Partnership Agreement, please contact me at (202) 564-1251 or [mail to: hershberg.craig@epa.gov](mailto:hershberg.craig@epa.gov).

EPA has begun its preparations for the set-top box launch in January 2001 at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES7). Any company that joins the Program between now and the 2001 CES7 will be eligible to participate in all promotional and marketing activities at CES7, irrespective of whether the company has qualified products. Your suggestions and support are appreciated.

Finally, thank you again for your input throughout the specification development process. I look forward to an ongoing relationship that will benefit your company, consumers, and the environment.

Regards,

Craig Hershberg  
EPA Program Manager  
ENERGY STAR Home Electronics

Enclosure